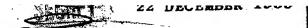
NSC BRIEFING



FRENCH ELECTIONS

- I. Campaign for 2 Jan 756 elections being marked by increased registrations, quickening tempo.
 - A. Over 1,200,000 new voters registered.
 - B. Candidates are drawing record crowds at record number rallies.
 - C. Poll indicates more Frenchmen than ever before intend to vote (88% of electorate compared with 80% in '51).
- II. Basically, a three-cornered race, which reduces possibility of elections producing stable majority: the three majors are-
 - A. Communists, who are playing up worker solidarity, pressing for left government.
 - nechanism--which worked against them in 1951--will be unable to deprive them of seats in proportion to their popular street.

- 2. 21 Dec estimate reported by Embassy:

 PCF will gain 35-40 seats, for

 total about 135 of 596(30 Algerian

 seats will not be filled now) at

 stake,
- B. Mendes-France Republican Front (coalition of Socialists, most Radicals and minority of ex-Gaullists), is attacking Right-Center "stagnation," advocating parliamentary, electoral reform to strengthen French executive.
 - 1. Republican Front hopes to win protest vote (usually given to Communists), and youth vote.
 - 2. Front expected to win about 150 seats.
- C. Third major group is Faure-Pinay coalition (includes Popular Republicans, a bloc made up of Independents, Peasants and most ex-Gaullists, and also those right-wing Radical s who have split from Mendes).

- STATE OF THE STATE
- 1. Is group is playing up cur nt prosperity, promise of higher living standards; also aiming at youth by advocating cut in military service.
- 2. Faure-Pinay group may win close to 300 seats of 596 total. Neverthe-less, little likelihood of stable coalition.
- III.Among smaller splinters are anti-tax

 rightists (Poujadists) who are running negative campaign against both Mendes and Faure candidates.
 - A. Their activity responsible for some violence so far.
- Contest between Mendes and Faure-Pinay block confused by fact that both blocs include wide spectrum of views, yet share basic ideology (differing mostly on method).
 - A. Formal platforms similar: only clearcut issue separating them is state aid for church school (1) opposes).

1. Mendes-France attempting create foreign affairs issue by attack on Pinay for accepting 19 Dec NATO Council statement on Soviet Middle East tactics.

- V. Both Pinay and Mendes pessimistic:
 - A. Pinay fears loss of votes to anti-tax rightists, thus forcing use of proportional representation in many areas (which will help Communists).
 - B. Mendes-France's private opinion of
 Republican Front chances is only about
 150 seats (company)